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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSK #1410 3261142  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 221142Z NOV 05  
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3360  
INFO RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0765  
RHMFIS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS MINSK 001410

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E.O. 12958: DECL: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: Empty Victory for Narodnaya Volya

REF: A) MINSK 1193 B) MINSK 1387

**¶1.** (SBU) Summary: On November 17, the Minsk City Economic Court ordered the state-run publishing house, Krasnaya Zvezda (KZ), to begin publishing the independent newspaper Narodnaya Volya (NV) again after KZ broke its contract with the paper. However, it is unlikely KZ will actually print any issues of NV before its original contract expires due to the lengthy appeal process that the publisher will almost certainly pursue. Moreover, it is unlikely that NV will be able to re-gain access to the state distribution network or postal subscription service. End Summary.

**¶2.** (U) On November 17, the Minsk City Economic Court ruled in favor of the independent newspaper Narodnaya Volya (NV) in its case against the state-run publishing house, Krasnaya Zvezda (KZ). The court ordered KZ to begin printing NV again after KZ terminated its contract with the paper on October 1 because of a EUR 900 debt (ref A). [Note: The paper was able to continue printing via a publisher in Smolensk, Russia.]

**¶3.** (SBU) NV deputy editor-in-chief Svetlana Kalinkina is not optimistic about KZ's resumption of printing despite the favorable court ruling. She told Emboff on November 21 that she fully expects KZ to appeal the court's decision. No printing will occur before the appeal is heard. The appeal process most likely will not be concluded before the end of the calendar year, which is when NV's original contract with KZ expires. KZ is under no court obligation to renew its contract with NV at that time, and therefore the independent newspaper regardless could lose access to the state publishing house.

**¶4.** (U) NV's case against KZ is just one of five that NV filed after being excluded from the state distribution and newsstand networks. On November 17, the Minsk City Economic Court ruled against NV in the paper's cases against Belsoyuzpechat, the state organization running the monopoly of kiosks and newsstands - and its Minsk branch, Mingorsoyuzpechat. NV plans to appeal the decision. NV has two additional cases pending; one against Minskoblsoyuzpechat, the Minsk regional branch of Belsoyuzpechat, and another against Belpochta, the state distribution network.

**¶5.** (SBU) COMMENT: The court decision forcing KZ to resume printing could be an empty victory for NV; even though the court has ordered KZ to resume printing of NV, the appeal process, if KZ chooses that route, suggests that it will probably not happen. Presumably, KZ was ordered to stop the presses and its decision to appeal would also emanate from the presidential administration. With two rulings against them and only two decisions pending, it is not

likely that NV will make much headway against the state distribution and postal monopolies. It appears NV will be forced to resort to its plan of establishing its own distribution network around the country and asking volunteers to hand them out on the street without charge (ref B).

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